

DRAFT
COMMENTS OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
(VDOT)

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

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Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Room TW-A325
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In the Matter of Designation of 211 and 511 as Abbreviated Dialing
Arrangements
CC Docket No. 92-105

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (VDOT)**

The VDOT hereby submits its comments on the status of 511 to determine whether the 211 and 511 dialing codes are being utilized in the manner for which they were assigned. VDOT has made a significant investment since 2001 to enable the 511 traveler information dialing code throughout the state. The initial 511 service in Virginia was publicly launched on February 15, 2002, and it covered one major interstate corridor and approximately 30% of the counties in the Commonwealth. In February 2005, VDOT deployed an upgraded 511 service and expanded the coverage statewide. To date, VDOT's 511 services have received more than 3.5 million calls.

Travelers in Virginia call 511 more than 112,000 times a month, on average, with tangible seasonal spikes during the summer travel season and major weather events, such as winter storms, tropical storms and hurricanes.

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Most callers are requesting traffic and highway information, but they are also requesting current weather conditions and information from transit providers. This service also plays a significant role in advising traveler's of emergency situations, road condition reporting and during interstate supporting events. Callers also report events by transferring to a live operator in the Transportation Emergency Operation Center. The Virginia 511 system offers transfers to the 511 services in Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina to further accommodate the needs of long-distance and through travelers and commercial vehicles. To be interoperable with 511 services around the country, Virginia 511 recognizes the national interoperability phrases developed by the 511 Deployment Coalition for highway, transit rail and ferry information and "help" functions.

VDOT currently offers the traveling public reports on 511 regarding impacts on the transportation network for all 95 counties, 100 roadways and 16 defined metro areas. VDOT is undergoing a restructuring of the phone service that will significantly expand the number of roads and towns covered, allow callers to obtain information quicker, and offer new menu items like "Tunnels and Bridges", which is in response to more than two years of operational experience and customer feedback.

The feedback that VDOT receives from its customers via 511 has become a valuable source of ideas for VDOT to improve the 511 service and change operational procedures. Our staff monitors 511 feedback daily and

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regularly contacts callers to address their concerns. The Virginia 511 service also has a survey feature that can be activated to further assess customer needs. This customer feedback will continue to help guide VDOT's travel information program and the 511 service.

VDOT staff records "floodgate" messages presented after the main greeting and at various places throughout the 511 menu to convey important information to travelers, including highway blockages, major events, and AMBER Alerts. These floodgates can be mandatory or interruptible and have proved invaluable to the traveling public and our operations staff. Once the redevelopment of the phone system is complete, VDOT will have the ability to post floodgate messages in significantly more locations in the 511 system, including every city, county, metropolitan area and roadway.

Over the last two years, VDOT has become more "511 centric" leading to significant changes in how incidents and events are reported, improving both the process and the level of information entered and tracked by field staff, making them more accountable for reporting incidents and activities such as maintenance and construction that impact travel throughout the state. In an effort to increase both the number and accuracy of events in the 511 service, VDOT works closely with the Virginia State Police to ingest events from their computer aided dispatch system. In 2007, VDOT has made great advances to enhance this data set by establishing new relationships and data links to local public safety answering points. This will ensure that

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the 511 users get the most reliable and complete information available as they travel across Virginia.

VDOT has received calls to the 511 service from phones originating in all 50 states, eight Canadian provinces, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Bahamas and the Cayman Islands. The calls to 511 in Virginia have been split almost 70% wireless and 30% landline, with the majority of callers (71%) having telephones assigned to area codes in Virginia.

VDOT also offers the traveling public access to its transportation network information online at www.511Virginia.org and remains committed to promoting access for our customers to the 511 phone service and website in the future.

VDOT is committed to the long-term continuation of this valuable service for its customer, the traveling public.

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Sincerely,

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